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Aug. 25, 2015

For immediate release

Contact: Mark Eddy - 720-201-4251

Silverton Town Board and San Juan County Commissioners Pass Resolution

Seeking Partners to Secure Federal Disaster Aid to Address Leaking Mines

Quick Clean-up Wanted

SILVERTON, Colo. – The Town of Silverton Board of Trustees and the San Juan County

Commission approved a joint resolution to work with their partners in the Animas River Basin and request federal funding to address the widespread long-term environmental and economic impacts from the Gold King Mine disaster, which unleashed 3 million gallons of toxic mine drainage into Cement Creek on Aug. 5.

The Board of Trustees approved the resolution last night and the County Commission gave its approval at a special meeting this morning. The resolution can be found at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/townofsilverton/atom/26841>

The resolution calls for elected leaders and staff in Silverton and San Juan County to immediately begin working with partners in the Animas River Basin to secure immediate and long-term funding to address the issue of leaking mines. Some possible projects include building and operating a water treatment facility for the acid mine drainage in upper Cement Creek; remediation of the contaminated mines in the Upper Animas River Basin; supporting scientific research and the development of technology to protect the watershed; and funding for economic and environmental recovery for downstream communities, including those of the Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute and Navajo nations.

“We have been working together for over 20 years to try to deal with the environmental threat of the idled mines in the area, but we’ve never had the resources necessary to get the job done,” said Bill Gardner, town administrator for Silverton. “We are committed to working with our downstream partners to make sure a disaster like the Gold King spill never ever happens again.”

Mining in the area dates to the 1870s, long before environmental regulations existed. At this point, no active mining operations are under way to be held liable for the damages.

Downstream communities depend on the Animas, San Juan and Colorado rivers for domestic water supplies, agricultural uses and to support their tourist economies.

“We recognize that this is a regional problem and that it starts in our neighborhood. We are determined to work collaboratively with our downstream neighbors and federal, state and local agencies to restore the water quality in the rivers and to make sure all affected communities recover from this environmental and economic catastrophe,” said Willy Tookey, chair of the San Juan County Commission.

The trustees and commissioners hope a formal request for disaster funding can be made to Congress within several weeks.